

Missouri Valley Trust Company
402 Felix Street
St. Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1848

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MISSOURI VALLEY TRUST COMPANY

HABS No. MO-1848

Location: 402 Felix Street, St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

Present Owner and Occupant: Missouri Valley Trust Company

Present Use: Bank

Significance: The Missouri Valley Trust Company is a significant local example of nineteenth-century commercial architecture, and one of the few surviving examples from the early commercial district of St. Joseph. It also played an important part in the development of St. Joseph as a regional center and a stopping point on the westward migration routes.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1859-1860.
2. Original and Subsequent Owners: Robert Washington Donnell and Albee M. Saxton, founders; Missouri Valley Trust Company since 1899
3. Builder: Joseph Pfeiffer, stone cutter
4. Alterations and additions: In 1883, the Missouri Valley Trust Company underwent major alterations. The size of the building was doubled by incorporating a neighboring building. Interior decoration of carved wood, along with tile floors and fireplaces were added during this renovation.

Sometime after 1887 the easternmost window on the north facade was converted into a door, and the original wooden tracery in the arched part of the first floor windows was removed. (This still exists in the second floor windows.) Also after 1887, the interior wooden partition was altered. The original geometric designs on wall surfaces, shown in drawings from 1887 and 1894, have been painted over. The original chandeliers have also been replaced.

- B. Historical Context: The Missouri Valley Trust Company originally served as the western branch of the Bank of Missouri. It is reputed to be the oldest building west of the Mississippi River continuously occupied by banking houses. The building is one of the few existing structures from St. Joseph's early commercial district, most of which was completely levelled in the early 1970's by the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of St. Joseph, Missouri in December, 1973.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The structure is two stories with full basement. It is a straight-fronted building in the Renaissance Revival style with characteristic string courses, quions, and cornice on the north and west sides. The other two sides of the building abut neighboring structures.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The north facade is 80 feet long, and the west facade is 40 feet long.
2. Wall construction: Exterior walls are of painted brick and stone.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance faces northwest, and is located in a rounded corner of the building. A secondary entrance is located in the easternmost bay of the north wall.
 - b. Windows: Windows on both facades are tall and arched with keystones. Placement on the first and second floors is identical. Each window has a pivoting sash with one pane of glass. On the first floor the semicircular section above the sash contains stained glass, while on the second floor the semicircular section contains wooden tracery as shown in an 1877 engraving of the building. On the second floor above the main entrance the window is the same shape as others in the building, but it is curved to conform to this bay.
4. Roof:
 - a. Shape: This building has a flat roof typical of the early commercial structures of St. Joseph.
 - b. Cornice: It is not clear what material is used on the cornice directly above the second-floor windows. A balustrade originally extended the length of both facades on the roof level.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan of entrance and main banking floor: The entrance gives access to a small vestibule area at the basement level with two, short, straight stairways. One is oriented east-west and the other north-south. Both lead to the first floor level, about four feet above street level on the west side.

The first floor level is one large room partitioned for banking functions by an elaborate wooden screen. The space is rectangular with partitions along two walls dividing the space into various work areas.

2. Flooring: The floor is covered with tile arranged in geometric patterns.
3. Decorative features: The interior is richly decorated with carved wood on the panels and columns of the partition and on the door surrounds and fireplace.
4. Lighting fixtures: Electrified ceiling fixtures

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

National Register Nomination Form, "Market Square Historic District, Buchanan County, St. Joseph, Missouri," compiled by M. Patricia Holmes, January, 1972.

National Register Nomination Form, "Missouri Valley Trust Company Historic District, Buchanan County, St. Joseph, Missouri," compiled by M. Patricia Holmes, October, 1974.

Prepared by:
Robert Buerglener, HABS historian
July 1, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
MISSOURI VALLEY TRUST COMPANY
Fourth and Felix Streets
Saint Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1848

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